United Nations E/2001/84

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
13 June 2001

Original: English

Substantive session of 2001
Geneva, 2-27 July 2001
Item 14 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Social and human rights questions: social development

Global campaign for poverty eradication

Note by the Secretariat

1. The General Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session, decided to "place poverty eradication at the centre of economic and social development and build consensus with all relevant actors at all levels on policies and strategies to reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by one half by the year 2015, with a view to eradicating poverty".[1] It furthermore invited the Economic and Social Council "to consolidate the ongoing initiatives and actions established in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006) and the recommendations contained in the [outcome of the twenty-fourth special session] with a view to launching a global campaign to eradicate poverty".[2]

2. The goal to halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day was reaffirmed by the General Assembly in its Millennium Declaration (see Assembly resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000).

3. The recommendation of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly concerning the launching of a "global campaign" to eradicate poverty is extremely wide-ranging in scope. Two broad components, on the basis of which the Economic and Social Council may wish to articulate its action, are implied in the recommendation: first, the "consolidation" of relevant initiatives and activities by the international community; and, second, the launch of a major advocacy effort. As outlined in the present note, the first component calls for the United Nations system to take the lead in enhancing the coordination and coherence of its own activities, in relation to both its data-gathering and analytical work and its operational programmes. With regard to the second, the system can play, at all levels (global, regional and national), a supportive but nonetheless important catalytic role.

4. The present note focuses on approaches and measures being developed within the United Nations system to prepare the ground for the actions that the Economic

* E/2001/100.

01-40893 (E) 020701

and Social Council may wish to take pursuant to the recommendation of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. It draws largely on relevant aspects of the outcome of the most recent session of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), held in Nairobi in April 2001. The session addressed the matter in the light of proposals by the newly established ACC High-level Committee on Programmes, which has made the follow-up to the Millennium Declaration within the system a central element of its work programme. The proposals of the High-level Committee, in turn, built on previous work initiated within the framework of the United Nations Development Group and endorsed by ACC, for the elaboration of an Action Strategy for the United Nations on Halving Extreme Poverty (ACC/2001/CP/INF/4). That strategy identified priority areas for the United Nations system's poverty eradication programmes; outlined arrangements for strengthening the coordination of country-level action; and advanced a range of proposals for advocacy around the goal of poverty eradication.

5. The present note should be read in conjunction with the annual report of ACC for 2000 (E/2001/55), which outlines approaches to the role and contribution of the system to the follow-up to the commitments and goals of the Millennium Declaration, in particular as they relate to poverty eradication and development.

Internalization of poverty goals and consolidation of activities

6. As noted above, an important element in a global campaign to eradicate poverty will be for the United Nations system to further improve the effectiveness of its own actions to help Governments achieve and monitor progress towards the poverty-related goals set out in the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session and the Millennium Summit.

7. A critical condition in this regard is to improve and refine the data available through the system on poverty and its various dimensions. Improved data is needed to provide a common basis for the analysis of the causes of poverty and remedies, and as a condition for more focused and targeted programmes. The organizations of the system are fully committed to supporting Member States in this regard, both through technical cooperation in support of national statistical capacity-building efforts, and in connection with intergovernmental reviews of progress achieved in reducing poverty globally, in the context of reporting coordinated by the United Nations on the follow-up to the Millennium Declaration. The statistical capacities of the system are being mobilized, through the relevant coordination arrangements of ACC, to contribute in a sustained and coherent way to these processes, in line with relevant intergovernmental directions.

8. Apart from the improvement of statistical capacities and data, discussions at ACC highlighted the need for the poverty paradigm to be broadened — beyond the numerical target of reducing the number of people living on less than one dollar per day — to encompass a range of social, economic, educational, nutritional health and cultural dimensions as well as the important dimension of the empowerment of the poor. This was considered extremely important to ensure a lasting impact and truly global progress and, insofar as the United Nations system is concerned, to promote the active contribution and focused involvement of all its agencies and programmes in the overall effort to substantially reduce global poverty.

9. All ACC members acknowledge the imperative of integrating poverty eradication goals in policy development and programming processes throughout the system, and of "internalizing" the poverty reduction goals embodied in the Millennium Declaration. In this regard, ACC recommended, as an integral component of the system's contribution to the global campaign, that each organization, in the context of its mandate, undertake an analysis, to be shared, as required, with its governing body, of the contribution of its programmes to the poverty reduction goals. It was considered that such analyses could usefully distinguish between (a) programmes and activities directly targeted at the poor, such as microcredit; (b) broader programmes in, for instance, health or education, that contribute to improvement of the conditions of the poor and to their empowerment; and (c) measures that affect the enabling environment for poverty eradication (such as trade and market access and debt relief). Complementing such analyses, an annual review of flows of concessional funding allocated to different programme components of the global campaign, to be conducted by the World Bank and other funding entities, was recommended. These programmatic analyses and reviews would, in turn, provide the basis for the development of a system-wide framework within which relevant initiatives and activities could be introduced and placed in relation to each other, thus helping to identify gaps and to promote mutual reinforcement and the most effective sequencing of interventions.

10. Enhancing the overall coherence of the system's activities also requires reinforcing linkages between analytical work and operational activities. This needs to be pursued within each organization as well as at the inter-agency level. At the level of the system as a whole, measures are being pursued to further strengthen interactions among United Nations system officials involved in analytical, statistical and programme planning work relevant to poverty eradication. As part of this effort, ACC is taking steps to establish an electronic network of such officials, which should also be open, as appropriate, to the participation of external partners. One of the contributions of this network should be to help deepen the system's understanding of a number of strategic issues that cut across the mandates and activities of different organizations and require further reflection and study. Among such issues are approaches to poverty alleviation in post-conflict situations, and strategies to deal with vulnerabilities engendered by the interrelationships between environmental degradation and poverty and other aspects of human security, as they affect overall poverty eradication strategies.

Advocacy

11. The poverty eradication objectives set by the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session and the Millennium Declaration are extremely challenging and current trends are far from encouraging. Their realization will require, at all levels, unfaltering political will to maintain the necessary focus on the agreed goals, and to advance in establishing the conditions and the environment — locally, nationally and internationally — most conducive to concrete and steady progress.

12. A major advocacy effort to engage political leaders and mobilize world opinion in achieving the 2015 target embodied in the Millennium Declaration should be a central component of the global campaign. The challenge is of such magnitude and complexity that it can only be met if it becomes a major focus of the

commitments and engagement of national Governments and the donor community and of all forces in civil society and the private sector.

13. Experience has shown that the system can play a distinct role in generating political support, promoting partnerships and mobilizing resources for global causes of common concern and no cause is more central to the peace-building and development missions of the United Nations system than the eradication of poverty.

14. In the first instance, the system can lend force and credibility to its contribution to the advocacy effort by reinforcing the coherence and effectiveness of its support programme, along the lines outlined above. In addition, the Secretary-General and other executive heads are committed to using every available opportunity, including global gatherings and other major events, to help engage political leaders and galvanize world opinion around the poverty eradication goals of the Millennium Summit. Reporting to intergovernmental bodies can also be utilized throughout the system to highlight on a systematic and ongoing basis issues and policies that impact on poverty and its various dimensions.

15. The public information capacities of the various organizations of the system and relevant coordination arrangements within the framework of ACC can also make a significant contribution to the advocacy component of the proposed campaign. The ACC Joint United Nations Information Committee in particular has been asked to give priority to rallying a concerted system-wide effort to mobilize public opinion and political will in support of poverty eradication and to reflect on the most effective public information and communication strategies to be used by the United Nations and the respective organizations.

16. For the proposed campaign to effectively reach out, the regional and national dimensions of the advocacy effort will need to be given full attention alongside its global components. At the regional level, the regional commissions can make an important contribution to this effort, and the annual regional consultative meetings, held in follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46, provide a useful mechanism for systematically following overall progress at the regional level and assessing the impact of the system's contribution.

17. At the national level, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework should serve as the national counterparts of the proposed campaign, with the active engagement and support of both the resident coordinator system and the United Nations information centres. Theme groups have been established in recent years in many countries on poverty alleviation and closely related issues, such as nutrition, health or education. These groups should be used to foster an intensive, continuous dialogue between national authorities and the country team on the action and resource mobilization strategies that can best advance the poverty reduction goals of the Millennium Declaration.

18. The capacity of the Organization to support and coordinate these initiatives and to play effectively its role of facilitator and advocate will obviously require support from the donor community to strengthen the resources it can devote to this challenging task.

Recommendation

19. In launching the global campaign, as recommended by the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session, the Economic and Social Council may wish to provide direction for the engagement in this effort of Member States and the international community. It may also wish to note the system's readiness to fully support the global campaign and the various initiatives under way at the inter-agency level, through ACC and its High-level Committee on Programmes, to enhance the coordination and impact of the system's activities, and give further guidance to the system's contribution at the global, regional and country levels. In the same context, the Council may wish to address the role that it would wish the United Nations Secretariat to play in this broader endeavour and call on Member States to extend their full support to this undertaking.

20. The Economic and Social Council may furthermore address its own role in the global campaign, including within the framework of its role regarding the coordinated follow-up to conferences and its functions relating to policy review in operational activities. It may wish to invite the Secretary-General to report to the Council in 2002 on progress accomplished in supporting the global campaign.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-fourth Special Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/S-24/8/Rev.1), chap. III, sect. III, para. 25.

[2] *Ibid.*, para. 155.